

VZCZCXYZ0708  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLJ #0052/01 0301527  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 301527Z JAN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5505  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1128  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000052

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

EUR/NCE FOR SADLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2017

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCA](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [SI](#)

SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: MOUNTAIN SCHOOL LOOKING FOR WAYS TO  
CONTRIBUTE

Classified By: COM for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. At a January 24 meeting with Lt. Miha Kuhar, the director of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) Mountain Warfare School, Kuhar eagerly embraced suggestions that the school partner with the U.S. Military's Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany and expressed interest in the possibility of Slovenia participating in mobile training teams in Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On January 24 PolMilOff and the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) Bilateral Affairs Officer (BAO) visited the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) Mountain Warfare School in the idyllic alpine town of Bohinjska Bela to meet with Slovenian mountaineer and school director Lt. Miha Kuhar and several instructors to discuss exchange, cooperation, and how the school can maximize its international training opportunities and contributions. Kuhar had previously briefed the U.S. delegation on the school during Pol-Mil talks in Ljubljana in April 2006. At that meeting the U.S. delegation suggested -- because of the school's small size and lack of resources -- that he seek out a strategic partner rather than dedicate significant resources to an effort to develop a NATO Center of Excellence.

¶3. (C) The BAO briefed on ODC activities in Slovenia and then moved to ways that the Mountain Warfare School could enhance its efforts through cooperation with the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany. The JMRC is the final training point for soldiers and units on their way to KFOR in Kosovo, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Kuhar was interested to see that JMRC has already established relationships with "lily pad" training centers (which offer off-site programs that pair with training done at JMRC) in several other new NATO countries including Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. BAO told Kuhar that SAF mid-level leadership is planning to pay a courtesy call on JMRC in March to discuss potential collaboration, starting with a plan to send a SAF contingent to JMRC this fall to participate as combatants in simulation exercises for troops headed to KFOR. Kuhar said that he would try to join the planned visit to present the Mountain Warfare School and what it has to offer.

¶4. (C) Kuhar said that he is seeing increasing interest in the school from top SAF officials with the most visible outcome being a commitment to increase staffing from under 10 to around 30 personnel (including dedicated individuals for

training, logistics, organization, and development at the school) in 2007. Despite its small size and lack of a live shooting range, Kuhar thought the school could be an excellent fit for training troops headed to ISAF and also stated interest in the possibility of Slovenian mountain warfare experts going to Afghanistan as mobile training teams for coalition troops. Ultimately, he said, the Mountain Warfare School is looking for partners with strategic vision to bring it up to speed on the most pressing challenges in mountain warfare and to give Slovenia a role in meeting those challenges.

15. (C) COMMENT. Though there was much talk of Slovenia's mountain warfare capabilities at the time of its NATO accession in 2004, Slovenian mountain fighters have not been deployed abroad, and training at the school does not seem to have significantly increased. Progress is further stymied by the SAF's focus on its showcase 10th motorized battalion, and its myopic habit of tackling important transformation issues one at a time. However, when presented with ideas, Kuhar was energized about moving forward and finding a way for the school to be a partner in preparing Alliance members for battle. The GoS has repeatedly heard and responded to USG calls for more international contributions, particularly to Afghanistan, often producing in numbers that far outpace other coalition members given Slovenia's small size. However, repeating a "one size fits all" demarche asking for further troop contributions is likely to yield fewer and fewer results. A more tailored and creative approach to seek out specific contributions in niche areas ) like the Mountain Warfare School ) that the GoS is well suited to provide, could yield further and enthusiastic participation by the SAF. END COMMENT.

16. (U) BACKGROUND. The SAF's Mountain Warfare School is often hailed as a jewel in Slovenia's crown and one of the key niche areas where Slovenia can contribute internationally, and in particular, to NATO. It has been one of the SAF's most prolific hosts for international training events, with dozens of bilateral, PFP, and NATO training programs under its belt including a 2004 visit by US Navy SEAL team eight for mountain warfare training and a May 2006 visit by members of the Colorado National Guard for mountain reconnaissance in combat operations exercises. In addition to serving as the home of the Mountain Warfare School the location is also the headquarters for the SAF's storied 132nd Mountain Battalion whose members are known as "gamsi" (in English the chamois) after the goat-like animal that makes its home in Slovenia's Julian Alps. END BACKGROUND.  
ROBERTSON